

STATEMENT OF WITNESS



STATEMENT OF GORDON WALTER COOKE

DATED THIS 8th DAY OF December 2008

I, GORDON WALTER COOKE, declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence at the Inquiry I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

1. The Inquiry has disclosed a number of documents to me. Where I make specific reference to a document in my statement I have given the number of the relevant page.
2. In April 1997, I was a Police Constable attached to Portadown Police Station. I had joined the RUC in 1981 and I been stationed in Portadown since 1991. On the night of 26 April 1997, I was the driver of a mobile patrol vehicle on general patrol in the Portadown area. I was accompanied in the vehicle by Reserve Constables Paul Warnock and James Murphy. Before going out on patrol we were briefed by Sergeant **P89**. I had quite a lot of previous experience policing Portadown and one tended to get general late night assaults and incidents of a sectarian nature where Protestants and Catholics confronted one another in the town centre.
3. There has been produced and shown to me a copy of the statement I made dated 27 April 1997 containing pages **6363-6365**. In that statement I say that at 01.47 we were in the support vehicle when we heard call sign Juliet Delta 81 on the radio. It was not clear what was being said, it was more shouting and I recognised the voice of the officer making the transmission as Constable Cornett.
4. I knew Reserve Constable Cornett was on public order duty in the town centre so I knew there was some problem there. We headed off to the town centre and

drove up Edward Street past the police station and turned left onto Market Street. It took us about three or four minutes to get there. I do not remember where we parked our vehicle but think it was on the near side of High Street between the junctions with Thomas Street and Edward Street. I have marked a spot 'X' on the map attached to this statement and our call sign JD81 to indicate the position. That map is attached to this statement containing page number **72838**.

5. When we got out we saw two men on the ground, some other police at the scene, a parked Land Rover and a crowd around the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street. As far as I can remember, the Land Rover was parked on the opposite side of High Street close to the junction with Woodhouse Street towards the direction of Castle Street. I have marked a spot on the attached map 'L' to indicate the position. I think the injured men were on the ground about five or six feet apart on the near side of High Street, close to the junction with Thomas Street. I have marked on the attached map two circles to indicate the approximate position of the two injured men.
6. In terms of police officers at the scene, I think Reserve Constable **P40** Reserve Constable Atkinson and Reserve Constable Cornett were there in the area of the Land Rover. I know now that Constable Neill was at the scene at the time but I don't recall seeing him when I first arrived. I don't remember whether I spoke to any officer there immediately. There was at least one other police car, which had arrived just before us. I think that vehicle was parked on the opposite side of High Street from the Land Rover between the junctions with Thomas Street and Edward Street but I can't remember exactly where. I have marked a spot on the attached map 'BU' to indicate where I think the back-up vehicle was positioned. I do not think Sergeant **P89** or Inspector McCrum had arrived at that stage.
7. The crowd comprised about 30 to 40 people and the majority of them were in the area of Market Street on the far side of the junction with Thomas Street. As far as I recall the crowd was taking up most of the widths of both sides of Market Street. I have marked the map with a line which goes across Market

Street stretching from the junction of Thomas Street straight over to Woodhouse Street. It wasn't a static crowd although there were persons in the crowd standing in tighter groups than others. The persons who made up the crowd did not appear to fighting amongst themselves, rather they all appeared to be facing towards the police and the injured persons.

8. There were a number of persons in the crowd who I recognised to be from the Loyalist community. The whole crowd was not necessarily Loyalist but there were certainly members of the Loyalist community there. I did not see anyone in that crowd who I recognised from the Nationalist community.
9. It is difficult to describe exactly what the crowd was doing because it was bedlam but they were shouting, some of them were waving things, some of them were walking along towards the police, and some of them were trying to get towards the two injured persons on the ground. I saw some of them being chased back a short distance by the police. It was very chaotic.
10. I had to pass between the two injured men and the crowd and was within about six or seven feet of them. As far as I can recall they were quite close to the Thomas Street junction. There were already two police officers there who appeared to be giving first aid to them. I never went any closer and so I am unable to describe the appearance of the injured persons. One of the officers who appeared to be giving first aid was Reserve Constable Silcock but I cannot remember who the other one was. There appeared to be one officer to each man. There was a little space between them as they were not lying side by side. Referring to my statement dated 27 April 1997, I recorded they were unconscious and appeared to have blood around their faces. I can certainly remember they appeared to be lying on the ground unconscious but I cannot now remember seeing blood around their faces. I accept I must have if I put it in my statement.
11. There were also two women and one other man close to them. The two women were quite hysterical, shouting and screaming. They were both shouting and swearing towards the crowd and screaming for an ambulance. I got the clear

impression that the crowd had been involved in the injuries to the men and the women were very angry with the crowd.

12. I did not see anyone in the crowd assault the men on the ground or in fact get closer to them. The police officers kept the crowd at least 10 to 12 feet away from the injured men.
13. I did not call for an ambulance because Reserve Constable Silcock, I think it was, told one of the women who was screaming for an ambulance that one was on its way so I assumed he had either asked for one to be called or he knew one had been called by someone else. Between the time of my arrival at the scene and the arrival of the ambulance I saw individuals and small groups of people trying to push past the police. Some of them tried to run around the police to get over to the injured men. There just weren't enough police at that stage to form a continuous barrier and as members of the crowd tried to break away several of the police officers had to break off to prevent them from getting towards the injured men. I joined in and when anyone came towards me I approached them, shouted at them and pushed them back.
14. When I made my statement on 27 April 1997 and filled in my notebook, I recorded a number of individuals whom I recognised at the front of the crowd pushing towards the injured men. I got a good look at them because I was no more than 2 or 3 feet from them. My notebook is now produced and shown to me containing page numbers **9968 to 9970**. I recognised Stacey Bridgett, a white male of about average height say 5 foot 8 and average build. I cannot now recall the colour of his hair although I think it was quite short. I noted that Stacey Bridgett's nose was bleeding. I don't recall him doing anything in particular that I took note of. I knew Stacey Bridgett as I had spoken with him several times as a result of carrying out my police duties in Portadown. I would have known him at some stage after 1991 when I went to work in the area.
15. I also noted another at the scene as **P53** . He has dark hair and was in his late teens at that stage. He was taller than me and I'm 5 foot 8 inches. I noted

in my notebook that he was wearing a multi-coloured checked shirt. I can't recall him doing anything in particular- he was just part of the crowd.

16. I also noted Rory Robinson as being at the scene. He's about 5 foot 7 tall; thin build, with short to medium black hair which was wavy at the front. He also had prominent front teeth and quite a thin face. I noted that he was wearing a yellow shirt with a fine check through it and beige colour trousers. I noted that on at least one occasion, possibly more he tried to push past myself and other police. I don't recall him being any more aggressive than that. At one stage I also asked him to move off the street away from the scene. I pushed him back into the crowd and told him to move on up the street. He went back into the crowd for maybe a few seconds. He reappeared again up the front of the crowd and I think I had to push him back a couple of times. He was trying to go in the direction of the injured people. I did not know what his intentions were at that stage. As I did not know who the injured persons were, I did not know if he wanted to help them or harm them. I decided that nobody was going to get over there while they were being given first aid.
17. I know Rory Robinson from Portadown. I have stop checked him on a number of occasions both on foot and in vehicles. I would have known him at some stage after 1991.
18. I also identified Marc [REDACTED] as being at the scene. As I recall, on my return from a two week holiday abroad, Detective Sergeant Bradley asked me to the effect of, "These people you've identified, are you sure about their identification?" I looked at my statement again at this stage and it suddenly struck me that I had put the surname [REDACTED] instead of Hobson. I clarified that with the Detective Sergeant and I made a statement to that effect dated 26 May 1997, which is at page number **11063**. I had simply put the wrong name to his face. He is about 5 foot 5 or 6 and of medium to slender build. He had very short hair at the time which was a dark blonde colour and he was clean shaven. I noted that he was wearing a black leather jacket and blue denim trousers. I asked him to move up the street and on several occasions he tried to go past me in the direction of where the injured people were. As far as I recall he was quiet

and not at all aggressive. He was simply trying to walk towards the injured people. Again I knew Marc Hobson from my police duties in Portadown. I could not say for sure whether or not Marc Hobson ever associated with Stacey Bridgett or Rory Robinson or **P53**.

19. In my statement I refer to other individuals I saw in the crowd. These were Timothy Jameson, who was in his late teens about 5 foot 7 tall, medium build and clean shaven. I do not recall anything that he was doing. I know him through his father who is a well known building contractor in Portadown. He was given police protection over a number of years because he had done a lot of work on security force establishments. The police used to collect his father every morning and give him security throughout the day. A variety of police officers would have been at his house collecting his father. I've probably seen Timothy at his father's house at some stage as I had carried out protection duty a few times whenever the regular protection officers were not available.
20. I also saw Andrew Hill in the crowd. He was wearing a navy jacket and blue denims. As I recall he appeared to be quite effeminate in some ways. Maybe it was the way he stood. His hair could not be described as long or short. I recall that I had seen him hanging out on the estate where he used to live. I had stopped and checked him maybe on the beat or out on mobile patrol a few times. I'm sure we used the Prevention of Terrorism Act to stop and check some of the individuals.
21. I also saw another man in the crowd wearing a grey 'Umbro' sweatshirt, fawn trousers and black and white trainers. There was also a female with long dark curly hair, wearing a black jacket and black trousers and a girl, wearing a grey Adidas top and purple denims. I later spoke to those three people at 05.50 and identified them as Kenneth Milligan, Lisa Hobson and Noelle Moore. I took their details because I thought they were potential witnesses. I did not see any of these people do anything which stood out other than being in the crowd, which was acting aggressively.

22. More back-up officers arrived including a Mobile Support Unit, now known as a Tactical Support Group, and eventually the crowd was moved off the street and out of the town centre towards West Street. I can't recall how many officers were in the Mobile Support Unit. It is difficult to gauge how long it took to move the crowd but my notebook states it was about 30 minutes. I did not use my baton and there was no officer present with a riot gun initially, although I think one arrived later.
23. Sergeant **P89** and Inspector McCrum arrived on foot from Edward Street shortly after the ambulance arrived and I spoke to them and briefed them on the basic facts from the point when I arrived at the scene.
24. The crowd finally dispersed at about 03.15. The barriers in the town centre were closed, which effectively sealed off the scene. There was a barrier at Thomas Street, William Street, Church Street, West Street, Woodhouse Street and High Street, which were all closed. That left the only entry point into the town centre as along Edward Street past the police station.
25. I then returned to the station with the other two members of my patrol, Reserve Constables Warnock and Murphy. I do not recall if we had a discussion about what had happened. The journey back to the station was only two minutes.
26. There was one police car still at the scene when we left and there was permanent police staff on duty at the Sangar, which was a fortified post with observation windows. This was outside the station on Edward Street. I understood that orders had been given that no-one was to be allowed into the town centre the area where the injured men had lain on the ground. The scene was not taped off before we left. To the best of my recollection Inspector McCrum was the senior officer at the scene at that time and he would have been in charge of the scene. I think my patrol car was the only one back at the station at that time. When I got back to the station I recall seeing the communications staff, Constable Adams and Sergeant **P89** and Inspector McCrum. I do not think there was anybody else in the station that time of night.

27. In my notebook dated 27 April I noted that I remained at the scene until 03.15 and then had a break at the station. I cannot recall what time I had my break but it was probably around 03.30. There is a recreational room and part of my break may have been spent in there.
28. During the incident, I think I drew my baton but did not use it on anyone.
29. I spoke to Inspector McCrum in the communications room, with others present and he told us that the duty CID officer had been contacted. CID had been contacted because it was obvious that a fairly serious assault had occurred. I did not know the condition of the two men at that stage but they had both appeared to be unconscious at the scene. He made it clear that my crew had to remain until the CID officer arrived because we would be required to speak to him and probably make statements to him before we finished duty that morning. I had told the Inspector that I recognised some people at the scene and he instructed me to speak to the detective when he arrived. I think Inspector McCrum was making sure, as far as he could, that everything that could have been done was being done.
30. I recall that it was obvious that Reserve Constable Warnock who was part of my crew had recognised at least someone at the scene. I don't recall who he recognised but I remember him saying that he had recognised people there.
31. I was not asked by Inspector McCrum to attend Craigavon Area Hospital and obtain clothing from the two injured persons. I am aware that someone else had been tasked with that and did in fact go and collect clothing from the hospital.
32. Shortly after that Detective Constable Keys arrived, although it is possible that he was at the station when I was being spoken to by Inspector McCrum. It must have been between 03.30 and 04.00, and he asked me to prepare a statement, which was to include my recollections of the scene and the identity and the description of anyone I recognised. I do not think anyone else was present at this stage. I understood he required it before I terminated duty that morning. I think, however, that the Land Rover crew had already gone home by then. I

prepared my statement in the medical room between 04.00 and 05.30 and gave it to DC Keys. He read my statement and then we had some discussion about it. He confirmed with me the identities of those I had mentioned in the statement. I do not recall any other debriefing after the incident.

33. At about 06.30 that morning I returned to the scene with DC Keys. I cannot recall if he asked any of my colleagues such as Reserve Constable Warnock to accompany him. I did not make an entry in my notebook as to what we did at the scene but I remember that I pointed out to DC Keys the position of the injured men, the position of the crowd, the position of the ambulance. I outlined briefly everything I saw where I saw it happen. The barriers were still closed and the police vehicle was still there. The street looked like it normally did on a weekend morning. There was the usual dirt, debris, litter and glass. I do not remember seeing anything out of the ordinary. I did not lift anything from the scene; I was there simply to walk DC Keys through it. I then returned to the station, resumed duty until 11.15 and went home. I had no further dealings with CID after that save for a short period some months later when I did some indexing for HOLMES. I was not asked to attend any formal identification parade or anything of that nature.

34. I became aware that allegations had been made about a Reserve Constable assisting a suspect, Allister Hanvey. I do not recall exactly when I learnt of that but I think it was when DCI K contacted me. On 20 November 2000, I was interviewed by DCI K, the notes of which are produced and shown to me at page numbers **11132 to 11139**. I was asked whether I saw Allister Hanvey at the scene, who I know through my police duties. I did not. I was also asked whether I saw Reserve Constable Atkinson talk to anyone at the scene. I did not.

SIGNED: 
GORDON WALTER COOKE

DATED: *8/12/08*